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Mother's Day vandals cause significant power line damage

Information leading to vandals worth up to \$1,000

Crime Witness Program Bonneville Power Administration

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Gail Dreckman, BPA, 503-230-3778,
gmdreckman@bpa.gov

CHEHALIS, Wash. -- The same sunny, warm May weather that has been attracting people to the outdoors has, unfortunately, marked the beginning of the vandalism season. The Bonneville Power Administration is offering up to \$1,000 for information leading to arrest and conviction of the vandals that shot insulators over Mother's Day weekend on transmission towers along the Longview-Chehalis 230,000-volt line in Castle Rock, causing approximately \$5,000 worth of damage.

The exact date and time of the vandalism is unknown, but the incident most likely occurred over the weekend of warm, sunny weather prior to May 13, when a neighboring resident reported the damaged insulators on transmission line towers near his home off Melton Road. A BPA line crew responded and found that nine out of twelve insulators along the line had been shot.

"The damage vandals caused by shooting insulators could result in greater problems," said Gail Dreckman, BPA security specialist. "If left unreported, increases in humidity or rain could cause the line to short over the already damaged insulator string, resulting in an outage."

Fortunately, there was no disruption of electrical service to customers. BPA used alternative pathways to electrify power delivery while crews spent several hours repairing the line. The economic consequences of a power interruption to BPA's customers could have been significantly higher than the costs associated with this particular incident, said Dreckman.

BPA annually spends between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to replace insulators damaged or destroyed by gun shot vandalism. These costs, including the \$5,000 repair cost of this incident, get passed on to customers and ratepayers. Above and beyond these monetary costs and inconveniences are the possible disruption of essential services -- fire departments, police and ambulance services -- that dependent on reliable electric service.

In an effort to discourage this kind of costly, dangerous and destructive behavior, BPA is offering cash rewards up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of perpetrators under its neighborhood watch-style Crime Witness Program. Informants can call toll free 1-800-437-2744 and

their identity will be kept confidential.

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